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Interview With World Champion Frédéric Chorein

by Jens Kreutzer
<jens@arasaka.de>

translated from the French and edited by Jens Kreutzer

Here are some questions I was able to ask reigning **Netrunner** World Champion Frédéric Chorein from France.

Could you please tell the readers something about yourself?

Bonjour to everybody! I'm Frédéric Chorein; my nickname is yocho. I'm 28 and I live in Clermont de l'Oise (France). I have a little sister, who is 16 and doesn't play **Netrunner**. But I've taught my little cousin Gérald how to play—the next generation is taken care of, even though I think that he plays too much **Warhammer Battle**!

I'm a pharmacist, which is a good job, and I have quite a bit of free time to indulge my passion for **Netrunner** and all things Cyberpunk, like novels, movies, comics and so on. Apart from that, I'm really into music, particularly rock'n'roll. Finally, if you ask me who the sex symbol of the year is, I'd have to say: my girlfriend!

*Well, we'd have to ask what she would have done to you if you had said anything else. ☺ But what about your "**Netrunner** history"?*

I started playing **Netrunner** about one year after it came out in France. It's been a long time, so I don't remember the year exactly. Like I often do, I had played (and spent a lot of time and money on) **Magic** in an RPG club in Amiens, where I was studying back then. My friends and I decided to look for something else then and tried out **Netrunner**. The least I could say is that it hasn't disappointed me. I found everything I like in it: a gripping background story (thanks to Cyberpunk), a perfect and multifaceted game system (thanks to Mr. Garfield)—especially so in Sealed-deck play, which is my favorite format (and to this, my wallet says thank-you).

We quickly organized our first house tournaments, with prizes donated by *Wizards*, and success didn't make me wait for long. I can't really explain that success, because at **Magic**, I used to be hopeless and without any luck, while at **Netrunner**, I was successful and lucky. My nickname was "yocho la main chaude" (Yocho Hothands), because at the first tournament I won, I opened my boosters and pulled Bartmoss and Joan of Arc. At that time, nobody knew that combo! My friends (and no less rivals) of that circle and I went quickly from playing with starters to building much more elaborate decks, which were, however, still a far cry from those I would encounter later in the first French Nationals.

I met Emmanuel Estournet and Laurent Lavenant; we played a lot and did a lot of friendly trading. And then, one year later, I made the top four in the first French Nationals. In the semi-finals, I got to know the power of the devastating stack with Priority Wreck, Synchronized Attack and tremendous bit-flow played by Laurent (though designed by Emmanuel) and lost miserably, while Laurent went on to become the first French national champion. My match for third place against Frédéric Vasseur, another strong opponent, ended in a draw: For me, Frédéric remains, alongside Florent Jeudon, one of the **Netrunner** elite—cool under stress, determined, intelligent and blessed with luck, as is normal for players who also belong to the **Magic** elite. We shared third place, and a friend of mine, Gwénaël Fortier, took second place.

What followed was less glorious, but I always did reasonably well in tournaments. Every year, I've organized a tournament in Amiens myself. In short, I'm still an active member of the French **Netrunner** community after all this time because I'm passionate about this game and I get to meet a lot of great people.

That way, against all expectations, I qualified for World Domination.

The WD tournament had to broken off in the final round unfortunately, but this left you as the winner (and very much deservedly, I think). How did you experience the tournament? Are there any memorable moments that you still recall?

Well, it was a very long tournament, but everybody was cool and played fair. I understand that some grew tired of it and I'd like to thank once more all those who participated in this adventure (Jens, the players, the judges, the spectators, the girlfriends, pets etc.). Of course I'm sad that it had to be cancelled like that, but it became impossible to continue.

What I (and also my opponents) remember is the incredible luck I had in certain situations: In one game, my opponent only had to access my subfort to snatch the agenda, but although there was nothing suspicious at all about it, he got his doubts in the last moment and jacked out. Yannick (the judge) and I thought we were hallucinating, and I went on to score the agenda in the following turn. This confirmed a game principle for me: In a desperate situation, you have to do the opposite of what appears to be the sensible thing to do, because the most powerful element of **Netrunner** is bluffing. What joy it is when you manage to pull it off!

Can you give us any other advice, more specifically on playing the Corp and the Runner in Sealed, perhaps?

For the Corp in Sealed, that's easy: build a balanced deck, with a little bit of damage if possible, but above all a means of scoring agendas.

For the Runner: surprise effects, most importantly bit-gainers, and making your runs with good judgement and not on forts where there is nothing to gain.

Did you get any prizes from Jennifer yet?

Jennifer, if you're reading this: Thank you again for the Olivia Salazar print and the *Brainware Blowout* supplement!

Your title of NR World Champion might not be challenged that quickly because we'll need to find somebody new to organize the next WD first. In your opinion, in what format should the next WD championships be held?

I think I'd prefer playing the next WD on the Gatling Engine. For the format, I'd naturally prefer Sealed. Most players on the gEngine seem to be motivated to play in such a tournament. A real Sealed tournament there would be a novelty, but many are already expecting the French to win (my good friend Frédéric Garnier and I have won both tournaments played there so far). *Vive la France*!

Organizing the next WD will be a lot of work, and Eric Platel, who is developing **Netrunner** on the gEngine, has recently turned father, which leaves him less time for organizing things like these. Nevertheless I'd like to congratulate Eric for his work done in the past, the present and in the future—he's a great guy. Thanks to him, you can now play **Netrunner** on the Net versus somebody from the other side of the globe or even the World Champion.

What's up in the French ***Netrunner*** *scene at the time? Are there any events planned?*

To be honest with you, it's a bit dead at the time. I'm starting to get worried a bit, and I'm somewhat ashamed since I didn't organize our annual tournament in Amiens this year. But then, Gilles Delcourt always organizes some very enjoyable tournaments in Belgium. Bravo, Gilles!

What is your favorite ***Netrunner*** *card?*

Without any hesitation: Technician Lover! The games I've won thanks to this card are countless.

Is there a message you have for our readers?

Thanks to all "Runners", especially Jens, the interviewer, for his devotion. **Netrunner** is number one. Bye, everybody!

Thanks a lot for taking the time to do this interview.

"Elementary, My Dear Wilson!"
Famous Netrunner Stacks
#18: HQ Attack/Bit Denial

by Jens Kreutzer
<jens@arasaka.de>
with support by Fabian Fritzer

"Important but boring."
—Byron "Neal" Massey on the HQ Attack/Bit Denial strategy.

It is common wisdom that having lots of bits is a good thing in **Netrunner**. Consequently, it is wise to try and keep the opponent's bit pool as small as possible, thereby limiting his or her options. For the Runner, this could mean running on various forts in order to force the Corp to spend bits for rezzing ice. Dropp™ is a nice card to have for this approach. However, it is understood that it is somewhat easier for the Corp to gain lots of bits, with nodes like BBS Whispering Campaign being slightly more efficient than the Runner's equivalents (cf. Short-Term Contract). Therefore, it should be hard for the Runner to win this "bit race" of keeping each other poor, because in order to make the opponent spend bits, you usually need to spend some bits yourself.

Still, Runners have tried to use a dedicated bit-denial strategy. The idea behind it is that if the Corp's bit pool is empty or nearly empty, it a) makes it easier for the Runner to continue this disruption, since running becomes cheaper (as expensive ice or upgrades cannot be rezzed), and b) it is more difficult to gain lots of bits if you are running on empty, since efficient bit-gainers like Accounts Receivable or Credit Consolidation need a minimum number of bits for playing. Both aspects taken together mean that once the Corp is down to zero bits, chances are good for keeping it like that.

The Runner needs to accomplish two goals for this: Drain the Corp's bit pool completely, and then ensure that it never recovers beyond the "magical ceiling" of four bits (as you need five bits to play Accounts Receivable), or at least not for long.

There are four Runner cards whose explicit purpose is making the Corp lose bits. Let's take a look at them for evaluation.

Weather-to-Finance Pipe (Prep)

`Make a run on HQ. If run is successful, do not access cards from HQ; instead, the Corp loses 4 bits.`

Priority Wreck (Prep)

`Make a run on HQ. If run is successful, do not access cards from HQ; instead, pay any number of bits to force the Corp to lose that many bits.`

Credit Subversion (Hidden Resource)

`Trash: The Corp loses 3 bits. Use this ability immediately after a successful run on HQ.`

Taxman (Virus Program)

`After each successful run on HQ, give the Corp a tax counter. Every two tax counters cause`

`the Corp to lose 1 bit at the start of each of its turns.`

Of these, Weather-to-Finance Pipe and Credit Subversion seem to be the opposites of Accounts Receivable and Efficiency Experts—but unlike those Operations, they also need a successful run on HQ to happen before they have any effect, and an HQ run usually costs bits. Financing a run on HQ without accessing anything just to negate an Accounts Receivable, which many Corps pack by the dozen, hardly seems worth the effort.

With Credit Subversion, you get to access a card at least, but the Corp loses only a meagre three bits—note that Credit Subversion cannot be used in multiples at once, as using a second one after the first would no longer be "immediately after a successful run on HQ". It is worth some style points if you make the Corp lose some bits in this way in order to make a run on another, more heavily-iced data fort possible in a later action, but this belongs more into Sealed matches than into Constructed decks.

The other half, Taxman and Priority Wreck, show much more potential. Taxman lets the Runner access cards while handing out virus counters, and virus counters continue their disruption automatically, even long after the original run (and even if the program that created them is trashed). A virus also combines nicely with Shredder Uplink Protocol, unlike preps. Priority Wreck, on the other hand, is strong because it lets the Runner destroy *all* of the Corp's bits, as long as the Runner has enough of his own. Loan from Chiba seems to be the perfect match for that, though Edited Shipping Manifests might also be worth a look, since it fits the HQ-attack theme so well.

It is mainly with these two cards, namely Taxman and Priority Wreck, that people have been experimenting with in their bit-denial decks. Posts to the NR-list on this topic go all the way back to 1996, with people like Ed (Scott?) Colquhoun formulating the basic theory on June 2 and Chris "Foolkiller" Wagner publishing his "Bankruptor" stack, an early incarnation of the strategy, on June 24. But Chris's stack doesn't yet combine Priority Wreck with the awesome power of Loan from Chiba, and so we turn to the following example by Frisco Del Rosario:

Basic HQ Attack/Bit Denial by Frisco Del Rosario

10 Loan from Chiba
7 Bodyweight Synthetic Blood
2 Krash
1 Taxman
1 Shredder Uplink Protocol
1 Self-Modifying Code
1 Priority Wreck
4 Weather-to-Finance Pipe
2 Credit Subversion
1 Synchronized Attack on HQ
4 Security Code WORM Chip
3 Core Command: Jettison Ice
2 Inside Job
2 Restrictive Net Zoning
2 Militech MRAM Chip
1 Gideon's Pawnshop
1 Access to Arasaka

An old favorite is to first bankrupt the Corp with Priority Wreck and then follow up with a devastating Synchronized Attack on HQ, which then makes the Corp lose all cards in HQ as well. Frisco's stack has only one Priority Wreck; perhaps some Weather-to-Finance Pipes or Credit Subversions should be exchanged for more Wrecks. A portion of his deck borrows the ice-destruction strategy, which, alongside Inside Job, opens up the way into HQ. Once the ice on HQ is nipped in the bud with WORM Chips or jettisoned by Core Commands, Restricted Net Zoning makes sure that there won't be any more ice anytime soon.

Since a bankrupted Corp won't be able to afford any tagging antics or the trashing of Loans, a lone Access to Arasaka is perhaps enough tag protection in this case despite the vulnerable resources. Frisco's deck lacks a "winning kit", but if all goes well, the Runner will be able to run HQ at will, and with time, one agenda or the other will show up. With the Corp being broke, chances are that accessing R&D or subsidiary data forts won't be too expensive for the Runner either. The main danger is that the stack will eventually run dry when all of the Loans have been installed.

A newer, sleeker version of this strategy was successfully played by Erwin Wagner in the 2000 German Nationals Revised Constructed tournament. Erwin dispenses with underpowered cards like Weather-to-Finance Pipe and instead just plays four Priority Wreck and two Taxman:

Erwin Wagner's HQ Attack/Bit Denial

11 Loan from Chiba
9 Bodyweight Synthetic Blood
1 Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker
2 Taxman
1 Vienna 22
3 Self-Modifying Code
4 Priority Wreck
1 Synchronized Attack on HQ
1 Forged Activation Orders
2 Core Command: Jettison Ice
3 Social Engineering
2 Restrictive Net Zoning
1 Code Viral Cache
1 Precision Bribery
1 Junkyard BBS
2 MIT West Tier

It's rather gutsy to play with just a single Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker (and no Joan of Arc): If Bartmoss trashes itself, only Junkyard BBS or MIT West Tier will bring it back, and this can take some time. Erwin obviously didn't expect to do much icebreaking, clearing away any ice on HQ with the phalanx of Synchronized Attack, Forged Activation Orders, Core Command, and Junkyard BBS. Social Engineering might be better than Inside Job in this stack, since the Runner will have lots of bits thanks to the Loans.

Dispensing with Shredder Uplink Protocol frees up precious MU for the virus ensemble, but leaves just one path to victory: HQ. Taxman, Code Viral Cache and Restrictive Net Zoning constitute a cruel lock, however, and therefore, this might just work out nicely. Precision Bribery is also harsh if the Corp

cannot afford the four bits to trash it. With Vienna 22, Erwin includes a “winning” card, which lets him see every agenda that passes through HQ eventually.

We have looked at two examples of the bit-denial strategy now. It has become clear that there is no “definite” version of this deck; rather, I’d like to define this archetype by the presence of the Loan from Chiba/Priority Wreck combination. Decks that only use Taxman, Weather-to-Finance Pipe or Credit Subversion could be said to be “lesser” variants that use the same basic approach.

However, in addition to the variation in the choice of weapons, you will find different degrees of focus within this HQ-attack theme. All of the four bit-denial cards, but most prominently Priority Wreck (best in combination with Loan from Chiba), make a reasonable addition to about any Runner stack. Does a single Priority Wreck in a stack that uses Loans as its bitgainer constitute a bit-denial stack? That’s open for debate and doesn’t really matter all that much; it’s just important to remember that bit-denial is a cool element to include in your stack, no matter how focused that approach turns out to be in the end.

In general, the strategy can be summed up like this:

1.) Secure continued access to HQ, either directly or with Shredder. This likely involves some degree of ice destruction.

2.) Bankrupt the Corp, which helps with 1.)

3.) See to it that the Corp won’t be able to recover from bankruptcy and that HQ remains open.

4.) Choose a winning strategy you like: Multi-access for snatching agendas or Scaldan for a Bad Publicity victory. Decking the Corp, who is probably unable to pay for scoring agendas, might be a third option, but the Runner must be careful not to exhaust his bit supply (by having played the last Loan, for example).

Much experimenting is still to be done with the bit-denial approach. To give you some food for thought, let’s examine some other cards that might fit into the theme. Some of these might be worth serious consideration, others might find their way into a fun deck.

Icebreakers
The question is: Full breaker suite or not? Krash and Bartmoss save on MU so that the viri can get on board, but they are either super-expensive or unreliable. Chris Wagner’s “Bankruptor” included a Dupré; a focused HQ-attack stack is a good excuse to try that breaker for once. Add other breakers to taste, but don’t neglect the MU problem. Rent-I-Con might be worth a thought in multiples with a Zetatech Software Installer, but this “kit” might just be too card-intensive to fit into the stack and too action-intensive (installing and re-installing) to be worth the bits it would save. Its two-MU requirement is also a problem when you want at least two Taxman and a Vienna 22.

Other Programs
Startup Immolator has been suggested as another means of ice destruction. Other than that, it’s all about virus alternatives: Butcher Boy gives a nice boost to bit income; Pox might serve as an alternative to Restrictive Net Zoning. Crumble is a nice addition to Vienna 22, destroying ice before it is even installed. Cockroach and Gremlins would fit theoretically, but their power level is so weak that you would normally want to pick their stronger colleagues over them. All in all, there are lots of cool HQ viri; it’s just a question of having the MU to use them.

Resources
Mercenary Subcontract is an alternative to Crumble if you don’t have the MU, but it’s more expensive and a one-shot. A Wilson, Weeflerunner Apprentice, can provide cheap extra runs for virus delivery while doubling as a tag protection for all the Loans from Chiba.

Hardware
Bodyweight Data Crèche provides more MU and more runs for viri—a card that could fit right in if you have the space. HQ Interface is of course a classic for HQ-attack stacks; you might consider it if there’s no MU left for Vienna 22, but it is rather on the expensive side for its effect. Vintage Camaro and Nasuko Cycle are options for those Runners who feel a bit nervous about all the Loans hanging around.

Preps
Organ Donor (in combination with Bodyweight Synthetic Blood and MIT West Tier) might be the one bit engine on par with Loan from Chiba. One Donor yields a huge influx of ten bits at a time, plus you don’t lose any bits at the beginning of the turn, so powering Priority Wreck runs with Donors seems to be feasible. Romp through HQ is cool with Vienna 22, probably better than Mercenary Subcontract. Blackmail is too expensive to play seven times, but since HQ is going to be wide open, a copy or two could speed the Runner along to victory if the last agendas take their time showing up.

How does bit denial fare against various Corp strategies? In general, most Corps should be in deep trouble, since nearly every Corp strategy needs bits. HQ attack/bit denial is, therefore, one of the most powerful Runner strategies, and you will encounter it regularly at tournaments. However, Chris Wagner gives us the following warning: “The one loss this deck has suffered so far was due to a Corp with lots of very cheap ice that got rezzed up early. […] The strategy had been ruined due to my inability to gain access to HQ. Watch out for these decks!”

While Chris’s stack did not include enough ice-destruction to deal with this kind of situation, even with a more refined stack, a Corp that protects HQ quickly with two pieces of ice or so could find the time to thwart the Runner with a quickly-scored agenda (Psycho Tycho?), some tag ‘n’ bag action, or, which is the worst case, with a Siren. Net-damage surprises like lots of Setup!s can spell doom for a careless Runner, since there is seldom space for damage prevention in a bit-denial stack. Even if the Runner survives, Erwin Wagner for one would be slowed down considerably if his single Bartmoss got snagged.

An interesting matchup is the Rent-to-Own deck. Here, the Corp effectively bankrupts itself, so that all the Priority Wrecks become almost useless (Taxman can still be a thorn in the Corp’s side, though, because Rent-to-Own Corps like to keep a single bit in their pools. Restrictive Net Zonings may single-handedly keep HQ ice-free.). An early Colonel Failure or two in front of HQ do constitute a bit of a problem, but the bit-denial stack must adapt its strategy anyway when facing Rent-to-Own. With Loans waiting in hand and cards like Inside Job and Social Engineering at the ready,

the Runner should mostly forget about HQ and just wait until the Corp tries to score an agenda. Even with Bizarre Encryption Scheme, a favorite of Rent-to-Own Corps, the Runner should be able to run twice and get at the agenda points.

For dessert, I'd like to present an innovative variant of the theme created by Michael Nock. Michael also played this at the German Nations 2000 and won four out of five games with it. Its specialty is the speed with which it sets up, using *Classic*'s Boostergang Connections, a card that had been mostly overlooked and underestimated up till then.

Bit Denial with Boostergang Connections by Michael Nock

11	**Loan from Chiba**
11	**Bodyweight Synthetic Blood**
7	**Boostergang Connections**
2	**Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker**
2	**Joan of Arc**
2	**Viral Pipeline**
4	**Priority Wreck**
4	**Code Viral Cache**
2	**Valu-Pak Software Bundle**

This is an example of how the stack plays:

► Play Loan from Chiba.

► Play Bodyweight Synthetic Blood.

► Play Boostergang Connections and get Valu-Pak Software Bundle, Bartmoss, Joan, Viral Pipeline, another Loan, Priority Wreck, and Code Viral Cache.

► Play Software Bundle and install Bartmoss, Joan, and Viral Pipeline.

► Next turn, you can play another Loan and start Wrecking. With Bartmoss already installed, breaching HQ (and installing Code Viral Cache) is easy.

► All you need now are additional Loans and the odd Priority Wreck; everything else is already there. Lock the Corp down with Socket (and eventually Pipe) counters at your leisure. Score agendas while doing this as a side effect while the Corp watches helplessly.

Michael's "winning kit" Viral Pipeline isn't HQ-specific, but you could substitute Scaldan (or Vienna 22). This stack seems to be rather powerful, and I can only recommend trying it out, as well as the HQ attack/bit denial strategy in general. It is always a solid way to go in tournaments.

The one negative thing to say about it is that the experience can be pretty frustrating for the Corp if it never gains a resonable amount of bits again for the rest of the game. That's why Byron Massey calls the strategy "important but boring", and if you crave an interesting game in casual, you should perhaps avoid it.

Netrunner Draft Tournaments

by Jens Kreutzer
<jens@arasaka.de>

Karlsruhe Draft

Very little has been written so far about the third **Netrunner** tournament format next to Sealed and Constructed: Draft. Though supplies of actual starters and boosters are dwindling, if you can manage to get ahold of enough product for drafting, it is great fun.

I would like to present the draft format used in Lukas Kautzsch's regular tournaments in Karlsruhe, Germany. It is basically a draft variant of your normal Sealed-deck tournament, using one starter, one v1.0 booster, and other boosters as desired or available, per player. Lately, we've been going with one v1.0 and two *Proteus* boosters because *Classic* supplies have run out. One starter plus three or four boosters is a good number to make things interesting, but fewer booster are also a possibility if necessity demands it.

Since it was (to my knowledge) developed in Karlsruhe, I'd like to call this format "Karlsruhe Draft". Here is how it works:

1.) At least four players sit down at a table, determining seating order randomly.

2.) Each player opens one **Netrunner** starter pack. Drafting starts with the Corp starter deck.

3.) First, the 11 vitals are removed. Each player keeps his or her vitals; they are not drafted. This is to ensure that each player has the cards for building a legal deck.

4.) The remainder of the cards are then separated into three piles. The 30 commons are divided into two piles of 15 cards each. One of the two rare cards is added to each common pile. The 17 uncommon cards form the third pile. This makes two piles of 16 cards each plus one pile of 17 cards.

5.) The first common pile is now drafted in an anticlockwise fashion. This means that every player looks at his or her pile and selects one card to keep. The remaining cards are then passed to the player on the right, so that everybody has a pile of 15 cards in hand afterwards. Once more, one card is selected and put aside, and the rest is passed on to the right. This continues until all cards have been selected. Since everybody starts off with a pile of their own (as opposed to one starter being shared among several players), it is ensured that each player gets the same number of cards, no matter how many players are participating.

6.) The second common pile is drafted in clockwise fashion.

7.) The uncommon pile is drafted in anticlockwise fashion.

8.) Now, the Runner starter deck is opened. Everybody keeps their vitals to ensure a healthy mixture of icebreakers to build on.

9.) Since there are fewer uncommon cards in a Runner starter, the piles are arranged in a different way. The commons are once more divided into two equal piles, but both rares are added to the uncommon pile this time. The first common pile is then drafted in clockwise fashion.

10.) The second common pile is drafted in anticlockwise fashion.

11.) The uncommon pile is drafted in clockwise fashion.

12.) This concludes the starter drafting. Boosters can be added as desired; each player opens one booster of the same kind, chooses one card and then passes the remainder to the player on the right, and so on. With each booster, clockwise and anticlockwise are alternated.

13.) Each player should end up with the same number of cards in this way, which the players keep after the tournament.

Decks are then built with the drafted card pool in much the same way as in a normal Sealed-deck tournament. However, to avoid the problem of "rare-drafting" (i.e., drafting the rare cards not because you want to play them in the tournament, but because you want to add them to your collection), all rare cards are drafted separately again after the tournament: First, all rare cards from all draft players are gathered and arranged on a table so that everybody can see them. It should be calculated how many rares there must be so that no players can secretly stow theirs away.

The draft player who had the best tournament result then selects one rare card, which he or she gets to keep. Then, the second-best player chooses one, and so on. When each player has selected one rare card, the first player starts a new round of choosing. This continues as long as necessary until all rare cards have been selected.

After-tournament rare distribution is great fun, encourages players to give their best in the tournament, and helps to round out collections, since chances are that you will get one or another card that you need. It also greatly discourages rare-drafting, since selecting a rare actually nets you one *less* card for your collection (as you get to keep right away only *non*-rares that you draft). You'd better want to play that rare real bad, or you should think twice before drafting it.

If beginners are reluctant to participate in a Karlsruhe Draft tournament because they are afraid to get shafted by the pros, they can just receive the same number of starters and boosters as the draft players used and construct a normal Sealed deck with them. Sealed and Draft players can then play in the same tournament without any trouble, but Sealed players don't participate in the rare distribution afterwards (obviously, they keep the rares they got in their starters and boosters).

Other draft formats?

Other trading card games (e. g. **Magic: The Gathering**) often have booster draft formats. There have been experiments with boosters-only drafts in **Netrunner**, but they have met with difficulties because of the lack of enough vitals in boosters. There were often not enough agendas to go around, or, with a sufficient number of boosters, players needed to pay special attention to grab enough AP and icebreakers in order for their decks to be viable in the first place. Inexperienced players had great problems with this. In Karlsruhe Draft, this problem is avoided by giving the vitals of one Starter set each to everybody. Perhaps booster draft might be possible if each player brought a set of vitals to the tournament and was allowed to use them for deckbuilding.

Draft strategy?

It is not so easy to formulate a separate strategy for drafting, since it is so close to Sealed-deck strategy. In any given pile of draft cards, experienced Sealed players will be able to identify the cards that are strong in this environment. And so, in Draft, the first cards to go are usually bit-gainers for both sides, card drawing and card manipulation (Crash Everett, The Short Circuit etc.) for the Runner, and fast-advancement for the Corp. Also hot are multi-access (Rush Hour etc.), ice evasion (Inside Job etc.), and some extra low-difficulty agendas.

The Corp will try to get a good selection of ice once the "hot" cards are gone; the Runner will pick up a couple of MU here, some utility programs and tag protection there. The last remnants of any pile usually consist of Netwatch Credit Vouchers, Unlimited Mileage Programs and friends. And Decks, with an uncanny consistency. It is also a familiar sight to find the rare as the last leftover.

So far, there are few surprises. Wise drafters will have an eye on what they already got with their vitals (you will have to decide whether players can review their piles of drafted cards while the draft is still in progress); a Corp with many bad agendas might pick a Corporate Downsizing over money cards, a Runner with just Codeslinger, Black Dahlia and Raptor might be aching for a Loony Goon or Shaka. Everybody knows that a Corp needs bits, fast-advancement and playable agendas to do well, and that a Runner needs bits, multi-card accessing, a way to get at breakers fast (card drawing and/or manipulation), and some tricks up the sleeve along the ways of Social Engineering or Technician Lover—a good drafter will try to assemble a healthy dose of everything, if possible.

Still, there are more chances for interesting decks in a draft format than in Sealed. One effect is that given a similar skill of the drafters, power levels of card pools will even out, which is good. On the other hand, if beginners don't know their way around in Sealed, they will have a problem as the power cards get snatched up in no time, while they are picking Black Dahlias.

But there is also the chance for some individual strategies. Though you won't be able to assemble a Rent-to-Own deck or a Newsgroup Taunting deck, the Corp player has to decide whether to include some tag 'n' bag or not. In Sealed, this decision is also of relevance, depending on what you drew. But in Draft, going all-out for tag 'n' bag can have amazing results, amassing up to six or eight meat damage sources being quite the norm. Or you might choose to ignore tag 'n' bag altogether and go for other stuff, such as multiple Setup!s, which can be a bane for fans of Executive Wiretaps or All-hands. Some players will pick up a Chance Observation and an Urban Renewal if they can get it late in the draft, including it as a sprinkling, not as a main strategy.

A Runner faces the question whether to go for stealth bit sources or not, depending perhaps on how many other bit sources could be secured. If the decision for stealth is made, other cards to look for are Worms and MU adders. Clowns are usually passed to you several times during a draft; considering your icebreakers, you need to decide whether you want one or not.

Perhaps the true skill of a drafter is shown by his or her ability to spot the chance for subtle interactions. An Aardvark and a Jerusalem City Grid picked up early might sprout the idea for a "wall" deck, which eventually makes *Classic*'s sleepy ice more attractive than it usually would be. Or the Olivia Salazar/bitgainer ice combo might see play. If you have Data Fort Reclamation, an expensive node or upgrade might be that little bit more attractive. A variant of the tagging approach is looking for Dedicated Response Team and the easily-gathered Bloodhound ice that deals out tags. Perhaps even Namatoki Plaza and some juicy ambush node can be grabbed? As Runner, if you have Karl de Veres, go for Wilson, Weeflerunner Apprentice, as well. If your multi-access consists of preps and not HQ/R&D Interfaces, Gideon's Pawnshop is golden, not to mention Junkyard BBS. Though Blink is very unreliable, if you go for them in a draft tournament, at least you won't have any trouble filling up on Net damage prevention cards.

There is much more to discover, but look for it on the small scale, not on the Six-World-Dominations-and-Silver-Lining-Protocols-scale. Comments on and hints for drafting technique by you, the readers, are most welcome.

Did You Know?

Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection

#18: Netrunner Odyssey

by Jens Kreutzer
<jens@arasaka.de>

Though the movie *Troy* only hints at the depth of its classical sources, it has brought one of the oldest stories back to public attention: the story told in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as Virgil's *Aeneid*. The influence of this ancient myth from Greek antiquity is so great that it extends even into **Netrunner**. Let's take a look at the two cards Trojan Horse and Siren.

The *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* tell us about the long siege of the city of Troy by the Greeks. Although heroes such as Achilles, Ajax and Odysseus (or Ulysses) were on the Greek side, after ten years there was still no sign of a decisive victory. The strong walls of Troy were not to be breached by force. Finally, wily Odysseus had an idea to defeat the Trojans by trickery. This excerpt of the *Aeneid*, in the English translation by Andrew Wilson, relates the story of the original Trojan horse:

"Battered by war, and let down by the fates, with now so many years slipping past, the leaders of the Danaans [=Greeks] built a mountain-like horse, thanks to the immortal assistance of Pallas, and clad its flanks with beams of silver-fir. They pretended it was an offering for a speedy homecoming: this was the story that was spread. They picked men by lot and, unobserved, hid them in its dark interior, closely packing the vast hollow belly with armed troops.

"There is an island, Tenedos, clearly visible from Troy: most celebrated and rich in resources while Priam's kingdom lasted —now there's just the bay with its unreliable anchorage for ships. This was where the Greeks sailed to, and hid on the deserted shore. We [=the Trojans] assumed they had gone home, making for Mycene with the wind behind them. And so all Troy shook itself free from its long agony. The gates were opened: we were pleased to visit the Dorian camp and the abandoned beach. […]

"Some of us gasped at the deadly gift from the virgin Minerva, and marvelled at the hugeness of the horse. Thymoetes was first to suggest it be brought inside the walls and stationed on the acropolis. […] Everyone readied themselves for the task and slid rollers under the feet, and tied ropes of hemp round its neck. The deadly engine, pregnant with armed men, mounted our walls. Boys and unmarried girls sang hymns around us, delighted to touch the rope with their hands. The horse crawled on, and came to rest menacingly in the centre of the city.

"Meanwhile the heavens revolved, and night rushed in from the stream of Oceanus, wrapping in deep shadow the earth and the sky and the guile of the Myrmidons [=Greeks]. The Trojans, scattered along the fortifications, were quiet. Sleep hugged their tired bodies. And now the Argive vanguard, ships in line, was heading out from Tenedos under the friendly silence of the complaisant moon, making for the familiar landing-places. The king's ship displayed a fire-signal, and Sinon [a Greek who had duped the Trojans into letting him and the horse into their city], protected by the unfair fates, thief-like loosened the pine-wood beams and released the bottled-up Danaans [=Greeks] from their womb.

"The horse, opened up, discharged them to the fresh air, and joyfully from the wooden cave emerged Thessandrus and Sthenelus, leading the way, then Ulysses the man of terror, sliding down the rope which had been dropped, and Acamas, and Thoas and Neoptolemus grandson of Peleus, and noble Machaon, and Menelaos, and Epeos, the actual builder of the device. They penetrated a city buried in sleep and wine. The sentries were cut down; once the gates were open, they welcomed in all their friends and joined forces, as planned."

So the Greeks hid in the wooden horse, which was then brought into the city of their enemies. The Trojans believed the horse to be a gift or a peace offering, while in fact it was their doom. This "Trojan horse" has become almost proverbial, and has been used metaphorically ever since to describe similar situations. Even in computer technology, the term can be found, as explained by www.webopedia.com:

"Trojan horse: A destructive program that masquerades as a benign application. Unlike viruses, Trojan horses do not replicate themselves, but they can be just as destructive. One of the most insidious types of Trojan horse is a program that claims to rid your computer of viruses but instead introduces viruses onto your computer."

Although it would have been fitting to include a Trojan horse virus program in **Netrunner**, the flavor text on the card tells us that it is supposed to be "[t]he high-tech equivalent of a teller slipping a paint bomb into a money bag." This probably means that the agenda (or the data associated with it) stolen by the Runner somehow informs the Corp of its current whereabouts—and the Solo team can then hunt the Runner down. The Trojan horse (hidden away in the data) is taken into the Runner's home (or cyberdeck), and instead of disgorging Greek warriors, it transmits a homing signal. This is cleverly represented in the artwork by Mike Kimble, which blends antiquity with an all-too-near future.

Though victorious, Odysseus, the mastermind behind the Trojan horse, could not enjoy his triumph for very long: On his long journey home, he encountered many dangers and had to endure many hardships and twists of fate, as we can read in the *Odyssey*. One of the dangers that lurked on his way were the Sirens, usually depicted as women with the lower bodies of birds.

Here is Samuel Butler's English translation (http://classics.mit.edu) of the relevant passages. The sorceress Circe warns Odysseus:

"First you will come to the Sirens, who enchant all who come near them. If any one unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again, for they sit in a green field and warble him to death with the sweetness of their song. There is a great heap of dead men's bones lying all around, with the flesh still rotting off them. Therefore pass these Sirens by, and stop your men's ears with wax that none of them may hear; but if you like you can listen yourself, for you may get the men to bind you as you stand upright on a cross-piece half way up the mast, and they must lash the rope's ends to the mast itself, that you may have the pleasure of listening. If you beg and pray the men to unloose you, then they must bind you faster. […]

"Here she ended […]. I then went on board and told my men to loose the ship from her moorings; so they at once got into her, took their places, and began to smite the grey sea with their oars. […]

"Then, being much troubled in mind, I said to my men, 'My friends, it is not right that one or two of us alone should know the prophecies that Circe has made me; I will therefore tell you about them, so that whether we live or die we may do so with our eyes open. First she said we were to keep clear of the Sirens, who sit and sing most beautifully in a field of flowers; but she said I might hear them myself so long as no one else did. Therefore, take me and bind me to the crosspiece half way up the mast; bind me as I stand upright, with a bond so fast that I cannot possibly break away, and lash the rope's ends to the mast itself. If I beg and pray you to set me free, then bind me more tightly still.'

"I had hardly finished telling everything to the men before we reached the island of the two Sirens, for the wind had been very favourable. Then all of a sudden it fell dead calm; there was not a breath of wind nor a ripple upon the water, so the men furled the sails and stowed them; then taking to their oars they whitened the water with the foam they raised in rowing. Meanwhile I look a large wheel of wax and cut it up small with my sword. Then I kneaded the wax in my strong hands till it became soft, which it soon did between the kneading and the rays of the sun-god son of Hyperion. Then I stopped the ears of all my men, and they bound me hands and feet to the mast as I stood upright on the crosspiece; but they went on rowing themselves. When we had got within earshot of the land, and the ship was going at a good rate, the Sirens saw that we were getting in shore and began with their singing.

"'Come here,' they sang, 'renowned Ulysses, honour to the Achaean name, and listen to our two voices. No one ever sailed past us without staying to hear the enchanting sweetness of our song—and he who listens will go on his way not only charmed, but wiser, for we know all the ills that the gods laid upon the Argives and Trojans before Troy, and can tell you everything that is going to happen over the whole world.'

"They sang these words most musically, and as I longed to hear them further I made by frowning to my men that they should set me free; but they quickened their stroke, and Eurylochus and Perimedes bound me with still stronger bonds till we had got out of hearing of the Sirens' voices. Then my men took the wax from their ears and unbound me."

In analogy to the dreadful voices of the mythical Sirens, a police siren or an air-raid siren is a device that makes a lot of noise to warn other people of danger. On the **Netrunner** card Siren, the artwork by David Logan once more fuses the modern and the mythical: In the foreground, something that might be a kind of police siren attracts Runners with loud noise (or data similarly alluring as the Sirens' advances to Odysseus), while in the background, a spider-like nemesis is lurking. A spider in its web is of course an archetypical image of a trap waiting for a victim, but this one sports a missile launcher and a laser targeting system. This might be a reference to the computer game *Doom II*, which featured spider-like cybercreatures with implanted heavy weaponry. Finally, the flavor text gives us an idea what kind of message (or "enchanting sweetness") sent out by the siren might be so alluring to Runners: "They'll come. Just leak one word: 'oops'".

To conclude: Siren is a classic, in almost every respect. In one respect, it's rather unfittingly a *Proteus* instead.